



# JANUARY 2021 INFOGRAM



CAPE FEAR CHAPTER CHARTERED MARCH 22, 1961

AN INFORMATIVE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF CAPE FEAR CHAPTER (NC-01)



## Farewell to President Ira Watkins

President Ira Watkins, left, completed his two years as president of the Cape Fear Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America and was recognized at the January Board of Directors Meeting held in the Iron Mike Conference Center with the MOAA Leadership Award.

It was presented by incoming Chapter President Richard Underwood on behalf of MOAA President Retired USAF Lieut. Gen. Dana Atkins.

Ira maintained an active chapter despite an international COVID-19 Pandemic. *Congratulations Ira!*

## BEING SWORN IN ARE THE 2021-2022 ELECTED OFFICERS OF THE CAPE FEAR CHAPTER, MOAA (PHOTOS BY DON GERSH)

Despite following COVID-19 requirements at the Iron Mike Conference Center, the incoming elected officers were sworn in by Immediate Past President Ira Watkins. From left to right are President Richard Underwood, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President George Bond, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Marty Williams and Treasurer Ralph Hinrichs.

Sara Ballard completed serving two years as secretary and decided not to run for the office again.



I would like to take this opportunity to say farewell and extend my sincere appreciation for having had the privilege of serving as the Chapter President for the last two years.

At our Board of Directors (BOD) meeting on Jan. 5, I shall have passed the gavel to newly elected Chapter President Retired Army Col. Richard “Rich” Underwood. The “swearing-in” ceremony for the president-elect and officers was conducted at the conclusion of the meeting. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, attendance was restricted to only board members.

Rich is an accomplished leader, and I am confident that he will exert quality leadership that will result in sustained successes for the Chapter regardless of the challenges. He will be supported by the elected officers and board and who will work tirelessly to achieve chapter objectives.

My experiences as the Chapter President were fulfilling and memorable. It was a learning experience to see first-hand the continuing efforts of the North Carolina Council of Chapters in advocating state legislation that will enhance the quality of life for the military community in North Carolina.

Even more fulfilling and memorable, was the opportunity to witness the generosity of chapter members in supporting our membership goals, fund raising efforts and programs. Each of you are unbelievably valuable to the success and relevancy of the Chapter. Your contributions, whether big or small, I have made a lasting impact on the Chapter’s capabilities. I thank each of you for your membership and generosity toward helping others within our community during my tenure as Chapter President.



LEFT: Ira was sworn in by as Cape Fear Chapter President on Jan. 25, 2019 by Retired USAF Lieut. Gen. Dana Atkins, President & CEO of MOAA.

To the board of directors, whom I had the opportunity to interact with over the past two years, there are insufficient words to express my appreciation for the commitment and work that you exhibited to ensure tasks and objectives were accomplished in a superior and timely manner. I am exceptionally proud of the flexibility and patience demonstrated by BOD members during the pandemic. As a result, efforts to conduct the business of the Chapter and meet Chapter objectives were not adversely impacted.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to communicate with our surviving spouses on a regular basis. I learned through that interaction that they are a unique and resilient group. They have earned a special place in my heart for the support that they provided to their spouses and their continue service to the community

In closing, I want to convey my best wishes to Rich and the board for success in the new year. To enhance that success requires all of us to unite behind them and for more of our members to volunteer their services. Let us move forward together, look out for each other, make the best of the days the new year has to offer, and take advantage of all opportunities to exemplify our motto of **“Never Stop Serving.”** Stay Healthy, Stay Safe and Stay Connected.

Sincerely,

*Ira*



## Editorial



**Retired Army Lt. Col. Don Gersh, Editor,  
(910) 624-4597 editor@cfmoaa.org**

### *I know, I know, it's been a while*

I must apologize to the leaders of the Cape Fear Chapter of MOAA for abandoning my duties the past several months. I feel badly about that, but honestly, I have a good reason.

I have always considered myself an average person, nothing more. Although I have served with some exceptional people along the way, it doesn't seem that their brilliance rubbed off on me. What a shame. Anyway, I finally made it to the top two to three per cent. Yes, but two to three per cent of people with adult-onset scoliosis.

Adult-onset scoliosis is rare. Also called adult degenerative scoliosis, *it commonly arises after the age of 40 or 50, is caused by degenerative changes in spinal discs.* ([www.clear-institute.org/living-with-scoliosis/scoliosis-in-adults](http://www.clear-institute.org/living-with-scoliosis/scoliosis-in-adults)).

Also, it is possible for scoliosis to develop in adults due to disease, surgery, or trauma, although this is less common. I believe my scoliosis is due to trauma. Years of playing football, riding motorcycles, parachuting, etc. When I visit my doctor at Wake Raleigh Medical Center, the other patients are usually teenagers, many being fitted for braces. As my scoliosis worsened, twisting my spine to the left by almost 36 degrees and downward almost the same, I decided that surgery was the answer.

Well, I had my surgery on Nov. 30. All went well. I thought I would have healed by now, but the doctor said it will take about one year. I am impatient. I don't want to give it a year. But it's not just more than getting used to more than a yard of titanium rods, nuts and bolts in my back. It's mental too. I find it difficult to concentrate on any subject. I have no desire to read or write. I am not allowed to bend, twist or pickup weights. I have not been able to work in the yard. I'm sure many of you have experienced the same. Oh I'll eventually grow out of this and get excited over something. But until then, I'll just plug along. And I apologize.

But on happier note, I want to thank Ira Watkins for his service as President and Sara Ballard for her service as Secretary the past two years. They accepted the challenges and made our chapter better. I also wish to thank and congratulate our officers for 2021-2022: President Rich Underwood, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President George Bond, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Marty Williams and Treasurer Ralph Hinrichs. Thank you for stepping up and accepting the challenge!

*Don*

# Chapter News

*Critical positions on the board of directors vacant*

## Volunteers Needed

The elective positions of 2nd Vice President and Secretary will go vacant for the next two-year term unless someone steps up to fill them. Besides the elective positions, there are several appointive positions that need to be filled as well starting in January 2021.

There is a dire need of volunteers to help carry the load of operating the Chapter in an effective and efficient manner. These positions only require a commitment of a few hours of your time a month and most of the work can be performed from home. Any regular member or surviving spouse in good standing can fill these positions; spouses of regular members are also eligible and encouraged.

Some of the positions below have been vacant for two years and others have been filled by the same person for a long time.

**Surviving Spouse Liaison:** This position is considered an essential position by MOAA; it has been vacant for two years, but the duties have been performed by President Watkins. Though a Surviving Spouse is preferred for this job, anyone can fill it.

**Personal Affairs Officer:** Another MOAA-essential position, it has been vacant for over a year.

**Transition Liaison Officer:** A MOAA-suggested position; been vacant for two years.

**Newsletter Editor:** Don Gersh has been our Editor for 6 years, four of which he was also the Chapter Secretary; Don had to step down due to health reasons. We have been unable to publish a newsletter for the past 2 months.

**Webmaster:** Juan Chavez has been our Webmaster for 8 years and needs to pass the torch on to someone younger.

# MOAA News

## It's Official: Lloyd Austin Is the First Black Defense Secretary

JANUARY 22, 2021

*Editor's note: This article by Gina Harkins originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.*



*(Photo by www.aljazeera.com)*

*Note from MOAA: On Jan. 22, the Senate voted, 93-2, to approve General Lloyd Austin's appointment to the position of Secretary of Defense. MOAA's priorities that were central to the Jan. 20 Senate Committee on Armed Services confirmation hearing included: improving military housing conditions, sexual harassment and assault reform, and the importance of reversing OSD civilian staff cuts, improved public engagement, and rapidly confirming civilian positions as a way to mitigate erosion of the CIV-MIL relationship. MOAA is encouraged by Secretary Austin's commitment and positive response to addressing these issues, and we look forward to working with him in this critical role.*

Members of the Senate on Friday confirmed Lloyd Austin, a retired Army four-star general, to run the Defense Department -- a historic move that gives the military its first Black defense secretary.

Senators confirmed Austin's nomination in a vote of 93 to 2. Austin is the second member of President Joe Biden's Cabinet to be approved, following Avril Haines as director of national intelligence on Wednesday.

Austin arrived at the Pentagon just after noon Friday to be sworn in and begin work.

He tweeted immediately following the vote that he's proud to be the first African American to hold the position.

"Let's get to work," he said.

The House and Senate on Thursday cleared the way for Austin to be confirmed after both chambers approved the waiver he needs to serve as defense secretary. He's been out of uniform for less than the seven years required by law after retiring from the Army in 2016.

The House approved the waiver in a vote of 326 to 78 Thursday afternoon. The Senate followed suit, 69 to 27.

Austin said in a video message posted earlier this month that becoming the first Black defense secretary would be an honor and privilege. But it's not the first time he's broken barriers in his career.

Austin was the first African American to command an infantry division in combat. He was also the first African American to be Vice Chief of the Army and, later, the first Black general to lead U.S. Central Command.

"It shouldn't have taken this long for us to get here," he said. "There should've been someone that preceded me."

Austin steps into the role as defense secretary at a time when the military is facing renewed scrutiny over the issue of racism and extremism in the ranks.

Several troops have been forced out of the military in recent years for belonging to white supremacist groups or posting racist comments online. Military leaders across the force are reviewing policies that might inadvertently discriminate against some troops.

Austin told lawmakers Tuesday that he was committed to addressing those problems once he became defense secretary.

The military community is also overrepresented among those arrested following the Jan. 6 siege at the U.S. Capitol. Nearly one in five, or almost 20%, of the people who have been charged over their alleged involvement in the attack appear to have a military history, NPR reported this week. Only about 7% of all American adults are military veterans, NPR noted.

Defense leaders also warned last week that homegrown extremist groups are trying to recruit military members and veterans to join their causes.

Lawmakers from both parties have said Austin is the right person to lead the Defense Department at this time, despite not meeting the seven-year "cooling-off period" required to serve in the civilian leadership position.

Several senators said ahead of Friday's vote that they would confirm Austin. Sen. Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat who's on the Senate Armed Services Committee, called Austin an exceptionally qualified leader with a long and distinguished career.

Still, both Reed and Sen. Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said Congress should not overlook the importance of the law that bars recently retired leaders, like Austin, from serving as defense secretary.

"I'll vote today to confirm a clear patriot with an impressive career," McConnell said. "But I'll cast that vote with the understanding that our new secretary of defense specifically commits to balancing civil-military relations, empowering civilian leaders at the Pentagon and playing an active role in the inherently political budget process to get our forces what they need."

The retired Army general is the second retired officer to get a waiver in four years. Congress granted one to Jim Mattis when President Donald Trump nominated him to be SecDef a few years after he retired from the Marine Corps.

The two Republican senators to vote against Austin's confirmation were Mike Lee of Utah and Josh Hawley of Missouri.

# MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

## Our Mission

Promote the policies and objectives of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Foster fraternal relations among re-tired, active and former officers of the uniformed services and their reserve components

Protect the rights and interests of active duty, retired, veterans and reserve component personnel of the uniformed services and their dependents and survivors

Provide useful services for members and their dependents and survivors

Fund and administer a college ROTC scholarship program, support all junior and senior ROTC programs within our region

Serve the local military community through support of charitable and other service programs

## How do I Join?

Download a membership application from web site [www.cfmooa.org](http://www.cfmooa.org); complete the form, and mail it together with your \$20 check to:

**Cape Fear Chapter, MOAA**

**Post Office Box 53621**

**Fayetteville, NC 28305**

Or join online and pay with a credit card at:

[www.chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership](http://www.chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership)



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*...We are a powerful voice speaking  
for a strong national defense, and  
representing the interests of military  
officers and their families at every  
stage of their career...*

visit our website at [www.cfmoaa.org](http://www.cfmoaa.org)

Facebook and Twitter addresses:

<https://www.facebook.com/capefearchapter>

<https://twitter.com/capefearmoaa>

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### ***JANUARY***

- 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY
- 5 CAPE FEAR CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS,  
IRON MIKE CONFERENCE CENTER, 10 A.M.
- 18 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

### ***FEBRUARY***

- 2 CAPE FEAR CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING,  
IRON MIKE CONFERENCE CENTER, 10 A.M.
- 15 PRESIDENTS' DAY

### ***MARCH***

- 2 CAPE FEAR CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING,  
IRON MIKE CONFERENCE CENTER, 10 A.M.
- 14 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS